WE CLAIM:

1.   A computer-readable medium having computer-executable components, comprising:

a first component that is arranged to edit an electronic document comprising automatically generated document properties;

a second component that is arranged to prompt and receive custom properties for the electronic document from a user; and

a third component that is arranged to encode in an ML format the electronic document, the automatically generated document properties, and the custom properties received from the user.

2.   The computer-readable medium of Claim 1, wherein the electronic document is a word-processor document.

3.   The computer-readable medium of Claim 1, wherein the electronic document is a spreadsheet document.

4.   The computer-readable medium of Claim 1, further comprising a fourth component that is arranged to generate backwards compatibility properties in response to a version number of the computer-executable component, and wherein the third component is further arranged to encode the backwards compatibility properties in an ML format.

5.   The computer-readable medium of Claim 4, further comprising a fourth component that is arranged to generate application environment properties in response to an application environment of the computer-executable components, and wherein the third component is further arranged to encode the application environment properties in an ML format.

6.   The computer-readable medium of Claim 1, wherein the automatically generated document properties comprise a LastAuthor element.

7. The computer-readable medium of Claim 1, wherein the custom properties comprise a Married element of type Boolean.

8. The computer-readable medium of Claim 4, wherein the backwards compatibility properties comprise a Justification element.

9. The computer-readable medium of Claim 5, wherein the application environment properties comprise a zoom element.

10. A method for handling electronic documents, comprising:

editing an electronic document comprising automatically generated document properties;

prompting and receiving custom properties for the electronic document from a user; and

encoding in an ML format the electronic document, the automatically generated document properties, and the custom properties received from the user.

11. The method of Claim 10, wherein the electronic document is a word-processor document.

12. The method of Claim 10, wherein the electronic document is a spreadsheet document.

13. The method of Claim 10, further comprising generating backwards compatibility properties in response to a version number of the computer-executable component, and wherein the third component is further arranged to encode the backwards compatibility properties in an ML format.

14. The method of Claim 13, further comprising generating application environment properties in response to an application environment of the computer-

executable components, and wherein the third component is further arranged to encode the application environment properties in an ML format.

15.   The method of Claim 10, wherein the automatically generated document properties comprise a LastAuthor element.

16.   The method of Claim 10, wherein the custom properties comprise a Married element of type Boolean.

17.   The method of Claim 13, wherein the backwards compatibility properties comprise a Justification element.

18.   The method of Claim 14, wherein the application environment properties comprise a zoom element.

19.   A system for displaying and modifying electronic documents, comprising:

an electronic document file that comprises automatically generated document properties;

an editor that is arranged to is arranged to prompt and receive custom properties for the electronic document from a user; and

an encoder that is arranged to encode in an ML format the electronic document, the automatically generated document properties, and the custom properties received from the user.

20.   The system of claim 19, wherein the electronic document is stored in a proprietary format.

21.   The system of Claim 19, wherein the electronic document is a word-processor document.

22.   The system of Claim 19, wherein the electronic document is a spreadsheet document.

23.   The system of Claim 19, wherein the editor is further arranged to generate backwards compatibility properties in response to a version number of the computer-executable component, and wherein the editor is further arranged to encode the backwards compatibility properties in an ML format.

24.   The system of Claim 23, wherein the editor is further arranged to generate application environment properties in response to an application environment of the computer-executable components, and wherein the third component is further arranged to encode the application environment properties in an ML format.

25.   The system of Claim 19, wherein the automatically generated document properties comprise a LastAuthor element.

26.   The system of Claim 19, wherein the wherein the custom properties comprise a Married element of type Boolean.

27.   The system of Claim 23, wherein the backwards compatibility properties comprise a Justification element.

28.   The system of Claim 24, wherein the application environment properties comprise a zoom element.